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JESUS AS THE PROPHETIC SERVANT OF THE LORD.

(MATTHEW 12:18-21.)

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Isaiah 42:1-4: הֵן עַבְדִּי אֶתְמַקְדֵּב־בּוֹ בְּחִירִי רָצָהָה נַפְשִׁי נִתְּתִי וְיֹהִי עָלָיו מִשְׁפָּט
לְגוֹיִם יוֹצִיא: לֹא יִצְעַק וְלֹא יִשָּׂא וְלֹא־יִשְׁמִיעַ בְּחִוּץ קוֹלוֹ: קָנָה רָצוֹן לֹא
וְשִׁבּוֹר וּפְשָׁתָהּ כָּהָה לֹא וְכִפְנָה לְאַמֶּת יוֹצִיא מִשְׁפָּט: לֹא יִקְהָה וְלֹא יִרָרַךְ
עַד־יִשְׁוִים בְּאָרֶץ מִשְׁפָּט וּלְתוֹרָתוֹ אֲיִים יִנְחֵלוּ:

R. V. (Am.): Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry, nor lift up his voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street. A bruised reed will he not break, and a dimly burning wick will he not quench: he will bring forth justice in truth.

Septuagint: Ἰακώβ ὁ παῖς μου, ἀντιλήμψομαι αὐτοῦ· Ἰσραὴλ ὁ ἐκλεκτός μου, προσεδέξατο αὐτὸν ἡ ψυχὴ μου· ἔδωκα τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπ' αὐτόν, κρίσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἐξοίσει· οὐ κεκράξεται οὐδὲ ἀνήσει, οὐδὲ ἀκουσθήσεται ἕξω ἡ φωνὴ αὐτοῦ. κάλαμον τεθλασμένον οὐ συντρίψει, καὶ λίνον καπνιζόμενον οὐ σβέσει, ἀλλὰ εἰς ἀλήθειαν ἐξοίσει κρίσιν· ἀναλάμψει καὶ οὐ θραυσθήσεται, ἕως ἂν θῇ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς κρίσιν· καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ ἔθνη ἐλπιούσιν.

Matthew 12:18-21: Ἴδου ὁ παῖς μου ὃν ἡρέτισα, ὁ ἀγαπητός μου ὃν εὐδόκησεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου· θήσω τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπ' αὐτόν, καὶ κρίσιν, τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἀπαγγελεῖ. οὐκ ἐρίσει οὐδὲ κραυγάζει, οὐδὲ ἀκούσει τις ἐν ταῖς πλατείαις τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ. κάλαμον συντετριμμένον οὐ κατεάξει καὶ λίνον τυφόμενον οὐ σβέσει, ἕως ἂν ἐκβάλῃ εἰς νίκος τὴν κρίσιν. καὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ ἔθνη ἐλπιούσιν.

R. V. (Am.): Behold my servant whom I have chosen; my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall declare judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles hope.

1. IN the original passage, Isa. 42:1-4, there is a description of that unique figure of prophecy, the Servant of the Lord. It would be beyond our purpose to enter into a discussion as to whom the prophet meant by the Servant. Some hold that he thought of personified Israel; some, the godly kernel of the nation, or the body of the prophets; others see in the Servant

the ideal conception of Israel; others, a prophet martyr; others again, the Messiah who was to come. The conditions are best satisfied if the Servant be interpreted either as Israel in its ideal conception, "personified and treated by the prophet as a being, a true divine creation," or as "a person whom the prophet foresaw as about to arise and realize in himself the conception of Israel, and cause it also to be realized in the people as a whole."¹

It is the character and work of the Servant which are of present importance for us. From Isa. 42:1-4 these elements appear to be essential to his figure: (1) He is the object of Jehovah's love, chosen by him to do a great service which none other can render (vs. 1). (2) He is upheld by Jehovah, steadied in his task, and equipped with his Spirit so that he is able to deliver the divine will to the world (vs. 1). (3) His work is to bring forth judgment to the gentiles, to set judgment in the earth, and to proclaim Jehovah's law to the isles (vss. 1, 4). Judgment (*mishpat*) is "practical religion," the conduct which is inspired by a love of righteousness, those principles of equity and humanity which issue from devotion to Jehovah.² To carry this far and wide over the heathen world is the commission of the Servant. The gentiles may be only flickering lights, but the Servant will fan them into flame. They may be like reeds bruised almost to death, but he will restore them to life and bring in the perfect reign of divine righteousness. (4) Neither thick darkness will quench his light, nor opposition break him like a reed; but with unwearied sacrifice he will establish Jehovah's law (vs. 4). (5) In accomplishing his purpose he will make no boastful proclamation, introduce no forceful measures like a military conqueror, nor use vehement self-advertisement; but he will deal in gentleness and mercy toward the weak, the shattered, the hopeless (vss. 2, 3).

2. The changes in the Septuagint. The first clause, "Jacob my servant, I will take hold upon him; Israel my elect, my soul hath welcomed him," introduces a definite interpretation of the Servant as Israel. "Smoking flax" takes the place of "dimly burning wick;" and the last clause is a free rendering of the meaning of the Hebrew.

3. The evangelist's treatment of the quotation. Matthew translates independently from the Hebrew, though he has the Septuagint in mind. The word ὑπέρτα—suggested possibly by 1 Chron. 28:6, 10; 29:1 (Sept.),

¹ See DAVIDSON, *Old Testament Prophecy*, chaps. 22 and 23; G. A. SMITH, *Isaiah*, chaps. 16 and 18.

² DAVIDSON, *Old Testament Prophecy*, p. 417; *Expositor*, Second Series, Vol. VIII, p. 364.

where it denotes Jehovah's choice of Solomon, or by Mal. 3:17; Ezra 20:5 (Sept.), which refer to his choice of Israel to be his son—displacing the Hebrew "sustain," emphasizes the absoluteness of the Servant's call. "My beloved" is substituted for "my chosen," possibly under the influence of the Targums, or because it may have been a current title for Messiah,³ or most probably by reason of the words spoken to Jesus at his baptism (Matt. 3:17; *cf.* 17:5). Instead of "cry" the evangelist, interpreting the Servant in the light of Christ's action with the Pharisees, puts "strive." In vs. 20 the Septuagint is followed in the words "smoking flax," but the last clause is a thoroughly independent paraphrase of Isa. 42:3*b*, 4*a*, to bring out the victorious issue of the Servant's work; "to victory" takes the place of "in truth," and the next clause is omitted. Vs. 21 is a return to the Septuagint rendering.

4. The context in Matthew. It seems that the quotation was placed here because of the preceding summary of Jesus' work in vss. 15 and 16. But its scope is not to be confined to this. A section of Matthew's gospel begins at chap. 11, the theme of which is the effect produced on various classes by the unwonted method of Christ's teaching. He is a stumbling-block even to John the Baptist, while the cities of Galilee reject him, and the religious leaders have set themselves in strong opposition. But in all his work Jesus is shown to be the true Messiah, the servant of the Lord. He calls to himself the babes and the ignorant (11:25, 26); as Lord even of the sabbath he sweeps away traditional casuistry, and is the merciful Revealer of the true righteousness of Jehovah (12:1-14); he is the only Son of the Father who knows his will, and to whom all power for the establishment of his kingdom has been committed, the Mediator of the divine purpose to the world (11:27). But in character he is meek and lowly. His burden is light. Though given all power, he does not wish yet to come into open conflict with his enemies, so he withdraws to an unobtrusive ministry of healing (12:15, 16). Not, however, because of failure, for he calls the burdened and wearied to him and can give them rest (11:28-30). He is thus an enigma, but the opposition of the Pharisees is prompted by evil hearts (12:24-37).

5. The fulfilment of prophecy. Thus we see that Matthew chooses this passage from Isaiah in order to show how Jesus is in truth the Servant of the Lord. (1) He is the well-beloved, the special object of the Father's regard, the Servant in whom he delights (11:27; 12:18). (2) Like the Servant, he is endowed with the Holy Spirit and able to proclaim judg-

³ See ROBINSON, "The Ascension of Isaiah," in HASTINGS'S *Dictionary of the Bible*.

ment to the heathen. *κρίσις* (12:18) is probably charged with the same meaning as *mishpat*—the divine law of righteousness (see also Luke 11:42). One purpose of this gospel is to set forth Jesus as possessing the Holy Spirit (3:16; 28:16–20), and his followers as the new Israel which takes the place of the rejected Jews (11:25, 26; 21:33–46=12: 18, 21). The subjects of his kingdom are of the character outlined at the opening of the Sermon on the Mount (5:3–12). All the weary and heavy-laden may come to him, to whom all power has been committed by his Father (11:27–30=12:18, 20, 21). (3) Like the Servant of prophecy, Jesus is free from violence or self-assertion. “I am gentle and lowly in heart” (11:29). Instead of engaging in contention with the Pharisees, he withdraws for a quiet work of power among those who need his help (12:15, 16). From the days of his temptation, Jesus had consistently refused to further his kingdom by loud proclamation, or to satisfy the craving of the Pharisees for signs (4:5, 6; 8:4; 12:16=12:19). (4) Yet everywhere he taught as one having authority (12:6, 13=12:20), and his kingdom was soon to surprise them by its powerful growth (12:28).

6. Method. It is evident that this quotation from Isaiah illumines a whole section of the gospel, and not only the immediately foregoing verses. It served especially to show the Jewish-Christian how his own Scriptures were most truly fulfilled in the messianic work of Jesus his Lord. The evangelist deals with this passage as he might have treated a piece of current coin, rubbing off the accumulations so that the features of their sovereign in whose name it was struck might appear in general outline. His method of handling the prophecy is quite free. He translates, inserts, omits, or follows the Septuagint at will. There is no ground for supposing that he drew from any Aramaic original, because the changes from the Hebrew are introduced with an evident purpose. But with the free treatment of the latter he evinces a fine apprehension of the deepest truths of prophetic teaching, having penetrated by clear insight to those essential features in the figure of the Servant which find their incarnation in Jesus Christ.